

Message Text

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TO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 047635

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRD, HK, US

SUBJECT: GSP -- HONG KONG

REF: HONG KONG 1730

1. EXECUTIVE ORDER CONTAINING A AND B LISTS MAY BE SIGNED AND PUBLISHED WITHIN THE NEXT WEEK. ALTHOUGH DEPARTMENT MADE MAJOR AND LAST-DITCH EFFORT TO GET HONG KONG INCLUDED ON A LIST, WE FOUND RESISTANCE AMONG MOST OTHER AGENCIES FOR REOPENING QUESTION WHICH WOULD RESULT IN POSSIBLE EXTENSIVE DELAY IN PUBLISHING OF ELIGIBLE COUNTRY LIST AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY (IN THINKING OF LABOR DEPARTMENT), POSSIBLY CAUSE BITTER PUBLIC CONTROVERSY WITH MAJOR SEGMENT OF LABOR MOVEMENT AS WELL AS CERTAIN INFLUENTIAL CONGRESSIONAL OVERSEERS OF MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS. IN THIS CONNECTION, AS CONSULATE GENERAL MAY BE AWARE, LABOR DEPARTMENT CURRENTLY-ENGAGED IN TRYING TO ORGANIZE
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LABOR ADVISORY GROUPS CALLED FOR UNDER TRADE ACT.

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2. ON BASIS OF OUR INTER-AGENCY CONVERSATIONS, WE ARE HOPEFUL (AND MORE THAN REASONABLY CONFIDENT) THAT HONG KONG WILL BE PLACED ON A LIST WHEN ISSUE IS FINALLY DECIDED. WE PRESENTLY ATTEMPTING TO OBTAIN INTER-AGENCY

AGREEMENT TO PERMIT US TO INFORM UK AND HONG KONG GOVERNMENTS THAT ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT PLACE HONG KONG ON "A" LIST IMMEDIATELY, WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO INCLUDE IT IN THE REVISED LIST BEFORE GSP IS ACTUALLY IMPLEMENTED. IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL IN THE EFFORT, THIS CONFIDENTIAL REPLY WOULD NOT STIFLE PUBLIC OUTCRY IN HONG KONG, BUT IT SHOULD HELP ALLEVIATE OFFICIAL CONCERN.

3. EVEN IF DIRECTOR OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, DAVID JORDAN, COULD ARRIVE IN WASHINGTON BEFORE ISSUANCE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER, THERE IS PRACTICALLY NO LIKELIHOOD THAT HIS PRESENCE AT THIS LATE STAGE WOULD HAVE ANY IMPACT ON QUESTION OF MOVING HONG KONG TO A LIST NOW. THEREFORE, HKG MAY WISH TO CONSIDER DELAYING VISIT UNTIL LATER DATE. WE ARE NOT ABLE TO PREDICT WHEN ISSUE WILL COME UP FOR FINAL DECISION, BUT WE WILL CERTAINLY KEEP CONGEN ADVISED. BRITISH EMBASSY IS OF COURSE IN A GOOD POSITION TO PROVIDE ADVICE TO HKG ON THIS MATTER.

4. PRESS GUIDANCE: IF ASKED FOR COMMENT AFTER EXECUTIVE ORDER IS ISSUED, CONSULATE GENERAL MAY NOTE THAT LIST OF COUNTRIES DESIGNATED ELIGIBLE FOR GSP TREATMENT IS PRELIMINARY, AND THAT THE US GOVERNMENT IS CONTINUING TO CONSIDER EXTENDING GSP TO OTHERS, INCLUDING HONG KONG. YOU MAY ALSO NOTE THAT SEVERAL COUNTRIES, INCLUDING HONG KONG AND ISRAEL, WERE NOT INCLUDED ON THE INITIAL LIST BECAUSE MORE TIME IS REQUIRED TO COMPLETE REVIEW OF THEIR QUALIFICATIONS UNDER THE TRADE ACT.
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